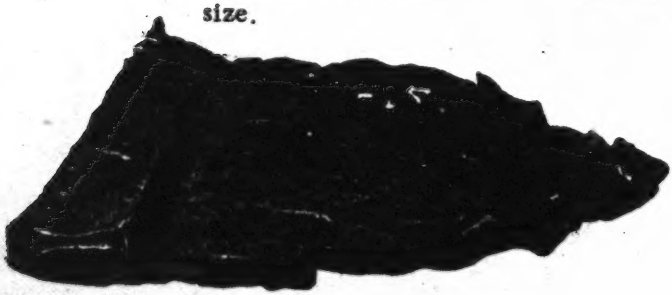
[p199]

415
251
252
262
• 285

Basket Sieve of the Topnaars, 1/3 natural size.

Nara Whisk, 1/5 natural size.



Nara Cake, 1/4 natural size.

The finished poles for the framework, !ha/nagu, are sunk in the earth vertically, making a circle with a diameter of 3 and 1/2 to 5 meters. They use from 20 to 60 poles, depending on the size of the hut. The upright parts form the framework for the walls and the thin curved ends the framework for the roof. The whole structure looks like a beehive. The finished framework looks like a wide-meshed woven net. It is about 2 and 1/2 meters high on the average. [229] Wherever the poles meet or cross, they are tied together with thongs or bast strings. The poles with a flat arc which go into the ground at a sharp angle and form the lower part of the wall are specially designated as *!na/nihaigu. There are usually four pairs of these. Larger huts sometimes are given necessary support by a pole the thickness of an arm which is sunk upright into the ground in the middle of the hut and supports the middle of the roof. The Bechuan hut also has this feature. Correspondingly it is called *ǂgurihaib or kχã!nab, also */naĕhaib, because it stands in the "navel" of the hut. The men build the framework of the hut.

b) The mats which form the roof and walls are made by the women. The material for making the mats is furnished by a reed grass, usually called rush, a Mariscus species, of the Cyperus genus from stalks glistening with fat and therefore called /hu· mi·haru s by the Hottentots. The plant is abundant in watery places. [Picture. Cyperus, Reed for a Mat Hut.] [Picture. Bone Needle for Sewing Mats. a) side view, b) full view. 2/3 natural size.]

The reeds are pulled out one by one (not cut) and put aside until dried.

Piercing and hemming (kχu·iam or *kχu·im) a mat requires a great deal of work. The woman sits in the manner described earlier (cf. p. 181) on a skin on the ground. The mat she is making lies in front of her, irregularly rolled up. She takes about 20 reeds from a loose heap, which is piled up beside her, places the bundle in front of her feet, adds the new reeds to those already bound. The toes of her right foot hold the reeds in the desired position on the ground while she is doing this. To sew the reeds together she uses a bone needle, */kχa·ru nã·b, made from a rib or a leg bone. The woman holds the threaded bone needle with her left hand and with her right she pushes 3 to 5 reeds at a time over the point to that they are pierced through. [230] Then the speared reeds are drawn off the needle onto the bast thread and added to the ones already in a row.*

*In Little Namaland I saw that the mats are not pierced by the threaded needle but by a

flat iron awl. The awl was placed on a slant so a path for the thread would be held open. A reed was threaded instead of a needle and then worked into the opening. The Little Namaland people call this reed /kʔo·rereb, but the Topnaars use this word to designate the end of the bast thread that is threaded into the bone needle. 342 285

When a few thousand reeds are lined up in this manner, they are pierced and sewn again in reverse order a few centimeters from the first row of sewing (see the arrows in the illustration). This is repeated in alternate directions until each meter long reed is pierced 16 to 18 times.

The free ends of the reeds are now bound together as the picture shows either in pairs or in threes and tied to the outer sewing thread all along the mat. Whatever part of the reed sticks out beyond this hem is cut off evenly with a knife leaving an amount the breadth of a finger. [Picture. Piercing and Hemming the Mats (Plan). a) Reed, b) Sewing Thread, c) Hem Thread.]

The mat is now ready for use. It is generally called /haru·b (3. st.). A mat called !gũ/b is prepared from considerably longer and stronger reeds.

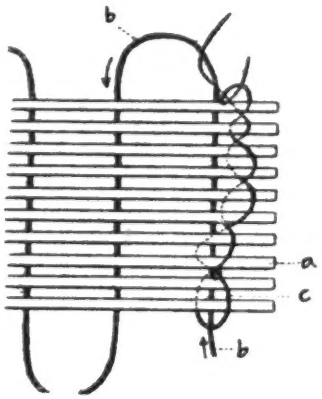
The length of the mat varies with the size of the hut (it must span the whole dome in one piece) and depending on the mat's position on the dome, is between 4 and 8 meters long and not quite 1 meter wide.

The reeds in the mat are placed only sufficiently close together to keep out direct sunlight. They let in enough scattered rays through the cracks to light up the hut pleasantly and also enough air to ventilate it. In comparison, the clay hut of the Herero is gloomy and dank but offers better protection against the rain. Only when it drizzles slowly and the mat has time to swell do the reeds contract to form a rainproof roof. [231] A mat lasts 10 to 15 years. When it reaches that worthy age it is called /ha·mi. [171]

c) The mat is fastened to the framework with straps or bast threads to the loops of the sewing threads that stick out like handles, in other words along the narrow sides of the mat. Mats (usually three) are hung (!na/ni) with their long sides parallel to the ground from the bottom of the hut wall to about the height of a man. They thus embrace the framework like a crown. The edges overlap a great deal. The other 342 [283]

342
285

[p.230]



Piercing and hemming the mats (plan).
a) reed, b) sewing thread, c) hem thread.

D. Wood Carving and Basket Weaving

Wood carving and basket weaving will be mentioned here briefly for continuity. The following wooden objects have already been mentioned: the chair (p. 181), the whisk (p. 199), the winnowing basin (p. 201), the spoon (p. 206), the mortar (p. 200), and the honey stick)p. 205). The text illustrations round out the picture of all the main types of wooden dishes and pails. [Picture. Repair of Wooden Article.] An informed Hottentot told me that the wooden vessels mentioned, which today have been supplanted chiefly by European metalware, are still made here and there, half boring them out and half scraping them out with an instrument which is called *//gare·s. The latter consists of a knife blade bent at right angles to its wooden handle. Unfortunately I did not succeed in acquiring such a tool.

Of interest is the way in which the Hottentots mend wooden dishes. Leaks and cracks in the dishes and pots are sealed with tough root fibres. To the right and left of the crack (a), holes are made in the wood and a root thread (b) is drawn through the holes across the crack, so that it bridges it on the outside. [Picture (244 and 245). Wooden dishes. 1/4 natural size. a, d, e: //hoëti, usually milk containers. h and i: the same with root mending. c and f: !ao//hoëti, milk pails, "neck bamboo." g: ≠aigaĩ //hoës, "foot bamboo." b: !ore·s, dish used for eating.] [246] A cross thread (c) is twisted around these bridges in the way the illustration shows. Only two parallels of the latter thread are shown. The scale is enlarged so that the method of twisting could be seen. Next to * is the end of the cross string; it is firmly fastened with several twistings. The entire repaired area is rubbed with fat. Gradually enough dust collects in the root weaving so that the hole is completely glued together.

Except for making mats, basket weaving is insignificant. Besides the nara sieves (cf. p. 199) only the fish baskets should be mentioned which the Hottentots use for catching fish in the Fish River. I did not get to see one.

E. Use of Clay, Stone and Metal

Work with the above materials has remained at the most primitive stages.

1. Formerly the Hottentots made simple urn-shaped pots by kneading and baking them out of clay and sand. The fragments found in

[Refer to diagram on p. 59(A).—Analyst]

Baskets
are made from suitably flexible roots and twigs. To-day [285] ●
they still accomplish great feats in the preparation of skins of 281
animals for domestic purposes. Hides are dressed according to a method inherited from their ancestors, the pieces of skin being put together in dainty and many-coloured patterns, which are sewn together with sinews of the animals.

In this way some form of home-industry has been developed [439]
in many a family, and as these skins are bought by Europeans they contribute towards its maintenance.

From their early youth the daughters help their mothers 593
in domestic duties, and without any special training, adapt 868
themselves to all sorts of labour, implicit in the management of a Nama household.

4. The main task is to attend to the cattle farming. As 231
nomads in earlier times they lived chiefly on the milk and meat of their cattle and there were rich people among them too; for old documents tell of a certain cattle-owner who [556]
possessed as many as 4,000 cattle and 3,000 sheep. Even up to the present day each family tries to rear some goats, sheep and, if possible, some cows too. All do not succeed, of course, in becoming well-to-do, whereas others own large herds. The Nama is not so keen on rearing cattle as on rearing sheep and goats. There is a simple reason for this. 231
A Herero of the old type is satisfied with curds and whey and 262
only enjoys meat if he has had luck while hunting or when an animal belonging to his herd has met with an accident on the pastures; but the Nama is not so simple in his needs; he wants to eat meat. As in a hot country, like South West, meat putrefies very soon, it is more effective for a family to slaughter a sheep or a goat so as to provide just enough meat for a day's need. White settlers also keep a flock of goats in order to satisfy their daily desire for meat, for cattle are not only too valuable but yield too much meat at a time.

In spite of this they always had rather small herds of 231
cattle in earlier days, principally in order to have riding 492
oxen and pack-oxen, as without these a nomadic life would have been almost out of the question because not only the men but the women rode on oxen during their long migrations; besides the poles and matting for the construction of their huts as well as their furniture had to be conveyed by means of pack-oxen. The Nama also possessed horses and used them for riding purposes. Fairly early and in their old wars and pillaging expeditions horses played a great part. The dog, however useful as watching over the house and assistant in the hunt, is never cared for properly.

5. The Nama has always considered himself to be a master 461
and he has always deemed labour beneath his dignity. His 357
weak limbs and delicate physique disqualify him for hard work so that wherever possible they employ herdsmen and domestic servants, and Bushmen, Bergdama and even Herero

8: Dapper Q-4 (no date) 1933
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Cape Hottentot

raw, and seldom cooked, with entrails and guts as well, first however, pressing out the excrement backwards or squeezing it out with the teeth.

When they find no dead animals, they look along the shore for dead fish, and for limpets, periwinkles and oysters. They also delight in the flesh of sea-dogs or seals, which they kill at night with sticks when these beasts come by thousands to the beach and bleat like calves. The meat they consume raw, or roasted in the fire half done and unwashed. They are likewise no strangers to the blubber of whales and other sea monsters which are now and then washed up on shore. It has happened that they scooped out by handfuls, and gulped down like that, the sun-dried blubber of a whale stranded in the Salt River, also cutting out pieces which they buried under the sand to eat later[72]). At times they tear pieces with their teeth out of their hard sheepskin or sealskin cloaks, and eat these only slightly roasted on coals. The Beachrangers, or Hottentots living along the shore at the Cape, come to the ships of the Dutch, and betake themselves at once to the kitchen, where, if they can, they remove whole handfuls of the fat floating on top of the meat kettle, and toss it into their mouths without bread. They are very fond of our bread, for which they willingly exchange cattle. The Saldanhars or Kochoquas and other neighbouring Hottentots live in the dry summer time on their cattle, but in the winter on certain roots growing in the ground during the rainy season. The honey which collects on the bushes they eat with wax and all. Their sick people they usually feed on cabbage, mallow and mustard leaves, cooked with a little stamped blubber.

They drink water or the milk of their cattle, but also hanker very greedily after brandy and Spanish wine, as well as tobacco; although they become sated and drunk from only a little, when they create a tremendous tumult of shouting and babbling.

INDUSTRY.

They trouble themselves with hardly any handicrafts or industries, other than preparing rushes from which to make mats for covering their huts, and herding their cattle and sheep. By watching our countrymen, however, they have learned to forge for themselves the points of their darts and assegais from bits of old iron, which they find thrown away by us here and there.[73]) They use nothing more than one stone as an anvil, and another as a hammer, and make the iron malleable with charcoal.

---

[72]) The incident is referred to in van Riebeeck's Dagverhaal, March 1-6, 1654.

9: Ten Rhyne D-5 (1673) 1933
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Cape Hottentot

342
361
291
285

How the Hottentots build their Huts.
(In the background is a representation of a kraal.)
[*After Kolb.*

[facing p. 116]

0: Grevenbroek F-5 (ca. 1694) 1933
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Cape Hottentot

ength. The first step is to mould the clay into a circle to form the bottom of the pot; then by further moulding they make a deep or wide vessel as suits their fancy and the aw of proportion; this is polished and smoothed inside and ut with the fingers and with a sea-shell, and smeared all ver with a red colouring matter rather like minium; the ot is then left for a day or two in the same house in which it was made, well covered with a skin or mat so that it may not get too much air or wind, and so dry too uickly and fall into cracks; finally the pot is stuffed with ry cowdung, provided with handles and placed on a bright re. After baking it is ready for various uses.[73])

Furthermore the inhabitants of the interior are very skilful in making closely-woven pails or baskets of reeds for drawing water or holding any sort of liquid. They are about the size and shape of our buckets and are perfectly water-tight. In the western parts Europeans have seen weels and nets (of native manufacture).

Both men and women cover their private parts with a sheepskin or some other kind of skin.[74]) Their hair is sprinkled over with various ornaments and gauds, including sea-shells, snail-shells, and many things cast up by the sea, their ears are heavy with pendants; and sometimes the men have the tail of a hare standing up on their crown like the plume in a soldier's helmet. Whenever they kill a sheep or any other animal, they smear themselves with the gall and twine the gall-bladder with their hair. But if the animal has been slain for the cure of a sick man, they superstitiously make libation of the gall, and put the gall-bladder, as I have said, on the roof of the hut in which the sick man is.

Hanging from neck, ears, and thighs the women wear chains, loops, pendants, threads, cords and strings of coral, or copper, ivory, iron or glass beads; on their fingers are various rings, and on both wrists, as a rule, similar treasures.

The men, whether walking or sitting, generally carry in the right hand the tail of a panther, fox, skunk or other animal drawn over a stick a cubit's length; and this serves them in place of handkerchief or towel to wipe away rheum or sweat. The men likewise have a leathern band, sash, or girdle, two or three fingers wide and several ells in length, which they bind round their bare thighs and tie in a knot near the rump. The two ends of it hang down like a tail between the buttocks to the length of half an ell.

---

[74]) The following description of Hottentot clothing is very slight, but in substantial agreement with those given by other writers.